

The Happiness Class

November 12, 2017

afternoon session: humour, laughing, envy

Sunday November 12

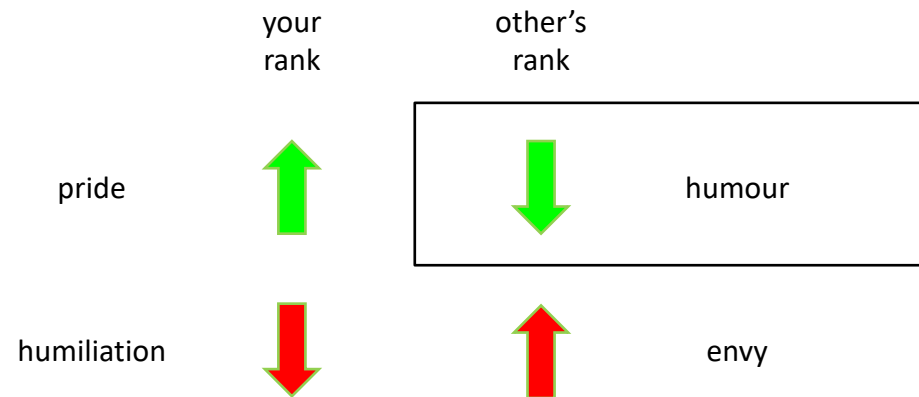
10:30am – 10:45am last week - questions/comments

11:00am – 12:00pm pride. humiliation

12:00pm – 12:30pm lunch break

12:30pm – 2:00pm humour, laughing, envy

You feel humour when
somebody's rank falls.



Humor is much more than jokes.

You don't have to use your gut anymore to evaluate a joke.

You can use gossip to learn what people's greatest fears are.

You feel humour

when you:

- hear a joke
- see a comedy
- hear a putdown
- witness a prank
- hear or relay gossip
- give or witness criticism

“ I learned that X made a rank-reducing mistake that I could have made.”

Humor rewards you for learning about the mistakes of others.

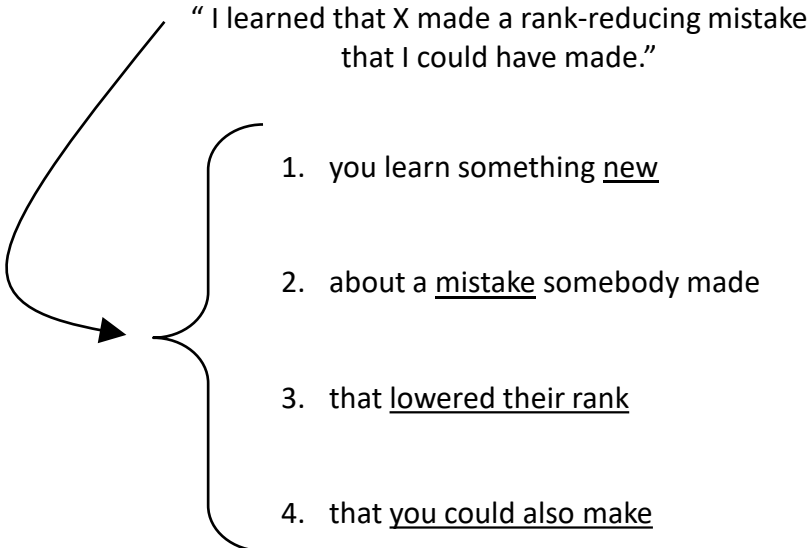
- triggered by anything that involves others mistakes by others
 - far more than jokes and comedy
 - gossip, criticism, pranks, putdowns
- learning about mistakes of others helps you avoid the same
 - learning about a drunk embarrassing himself
 - you are less likely to get drunk
- only triggered by mistakes you could make
 - no point in learn about mistakes you can't make
 - men laugh at ED jokes, women laugh at PMS jokes

The more likely you are to make the same mistake, the stronger humour feels.

- recent non-smokers are the first to criticize smokers
 - they are most likely to become smokers (again)
- people on diets are the first to criticize others for being fat
 - they are most likely to become fat
- focuses your learning where the benefit is biggest
 - you seek what makes you feel the strongest humour
 - which are the mistakes you're most likely to make

Humour has four requirements.

“ I learned that X made a rank-reducing mistake
that I could have made.”

- 
1. you learn something new
 2. about a mistake somebody made
 3. that lowered their rank
 4. that you could also make

#1. You must learn something new.

- jokes are not the funny the second time you hear them
 - “stop if you’ve heard this one”
- punchlines and twists bring new insight to known subjects
 - new insight is the something new
- you are only rewarded if you are learning
 - proof of humour’s purpose

#2. You must learn about a mistake somebody made.

- humor rewards learning about mistakes, but not misfortune
 - man falls after slipping on banana – mistake
 - man falls after being knocked down by tree – misfortune
 - being uninformed is a mistake, being short is not
 - being fat is usually a mistake, but sometime misfortune
- puns are not funny – no mistakes
 - *I was going to be gold prospector but it didn't pan out.*
 - have wordplay which leads to pride
 - but no mistake which means no humour
 - witty jokes include mistake and insight – humour and pride
- humour only rewards you for learning about what you can avoid
 - but not about what you cannot avoid

#3. You must learn about a mistake that you could make.

- gender specific jokes
 - men find jokes about erectile dis-function funny
 - women find jokes about menstrual cramps funny
- The Three Stooges
 - fans can imagine making similar physical mistakes
 - non-fans cannot
- tabloid newspapers
 - headlines focus on mistakes their readers are most likely to make – cheating and being overweight
- biologically logical
 - if you can't make the same mistake, nothing is gained by learning about it – so you're not rewarded

#4. You must learn about a mistake that lowers somebody's rank.

- no humour if somebody's rank already low
 - gossip about chronic drunks is not good dirt
 - gossip about somebody new becoming an addict is
 - clowns are not funny to adults
 - a serious person doing the same antics would be
- no humour if mistake doesn't lower rank
 - watching an underdog lose to a favorite isn't fun
 - watching a favorite lose to an underdog is
- if rank isn't lowered, there's nothing of value to learn
 - humour is entirely about not losing rank

“Even as a kid I got no respect.
When I played in the sandbox
the cat kept covering me with sand.”

Rodney Dangerfield

The best humour is self-effacing.

- humour must cause someone humiliation
 - someone’s rank must be is reduced
- humiliating others leads to problems
 - humiliation causes revenge and retaliation
 - targets of humour smile but are unhappy inside
- even if humiliated person not present, will lead to problems
 - will get back to them, particularly with social media
- problems are avoided by targeting self
 - nobody feels humiliation is except you – the first time
 - instead of humiliation, you feel pride if joke works

Writers and editors need to recognize their bias.

- until now, people could only use their guts to decide if something was funny
 - writers could only bounce their jokes off each other
 - editors could only ask others in the newsroom
- this changes now that humour's purpose is known
 - rewards learning about mistakes you could make
- current evaluation method leads to writing and programming errors
 - jokes/stories focus on mistakes of writers/editors not audiences
 - too many jokes about Jewish culture
 - too much coverage of newspaper scandals
- new evaluation method needs to focus audience reaction
 - at minimum, describe target audience and guess their likely mistakes
 - could also use audience in focus groups or on staff

Think of your audience

when picking or providing humour.

- tell jokes about mistakes your audience can make
 - don't tell the elderly about mistyped text messages
 - tell them about misheard telephone calls
- relay gossip about mistakes your audience can make
 - don't tell teens dirt about adults cheating on their taxes
 - tell teens dirt about teens cheating on their boyfriend/girlfriend
- pick comedies that focus on mistakes your date could make
 - don't take women to see The Hangover
 - don't take men to see Girls Night Out

Resist your subconscious desire to criticize others.

- humour subconsciously drives us to criticize others
 - without humour, people would rarely criticize others
 - no benefit to getting into arguments
- just being aware of this subconscious desire helps reduce it
 - you will now recognize what you are doing it
 - and why you're doing it – for you, not others
- best solution: habit of no unrequested criticism or feedback
 - will be a hard habit to change, but worth it

Expect others to criticize you.

- people around you will criticize you
 - they can't help it – probably not aware
 - your loved ones and best friends will be the worst
 - very likely to make the same mistakes as you
- kneejerk reaction will be to defend yourself
 - you will feel humiliation
- instead, develop habit of listening and moving on
 - best to let them just empty their advice
 - and then start a new subject – do not defend yourself
 - you will avoid wasting more time than necessary
 - not reacting is best way to discourage future criticism
 - thank them for the free advice

You can learn what other people most worry about from their choice of jokes and gossip.

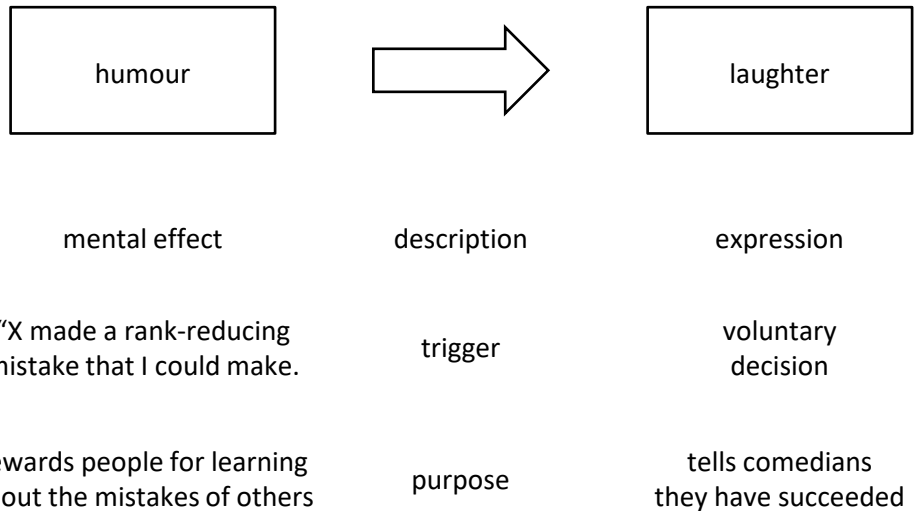
- people choose jokes/gossip that makes them feel the strongest humour
 - which are mistakes they're most likely to make
 - which are mistakes they're most worried about making
- subconscious worries are revealed by humour most frequently chosen
 - gossips about others drinking: worried about becoming an alcoholic
 - jokes about homosexuals: worried that they're homosexual
 - criticizes fat people: worried about becoming fat
- particularly apparent when conversational subjects are picked
 - the beginning of conversations
 - when pregnant pauses occur
 - when someone changes the subject

Trump is good example:
Lying Ted, Crooked Hillary.

You can learn what you most worry about from your choice of jokes and gossip.

- you choose humour involving mistakes you're most worried about making
 - jokes, gossip and criticism that makes you feel the strongest humour
- try to be aware of what humour most enjoy
 - easiest way is to note what makes you laugh
 - note what jokes you remember or create
 - remember gossip you like to tell or hear
- it may reveal concerns you may not be conscious
 - if you like to gossip about people being drinking too much, you're probably are worried about your drinking
 - if you like to criticize others for having a cheating spouse, you're probably worried about your spouse

Laughter is separate from humour.



Laughter is a voluntary expression.

- you choose when to laugh
 - you laugh at bosses jokes that are not funny
 - you wouldn't laugh at something funny at a funeral
- seems involuntary because it is a deeply ingrained habit
 - like walking or talking
- laughing is not a reliable indicator of humor
 - people rarely laugh hearing gossip

Laughter lets a crowd tell a comedian he succeeded.

- crowd cannot use words
 - cannot yell at the same time that was funny
 - it would just sound like noise to the comedian
- instead, we have developed the shortcut of laughing
 - universally understood to mean I feel humor
 - short, easily-made, unique oral expression
- applause was developed for similar reasons
 - universally understood to mean that was good
 - short, easily-made, unique acoustic expression
 - longer time lag of clapping okay for end of performance

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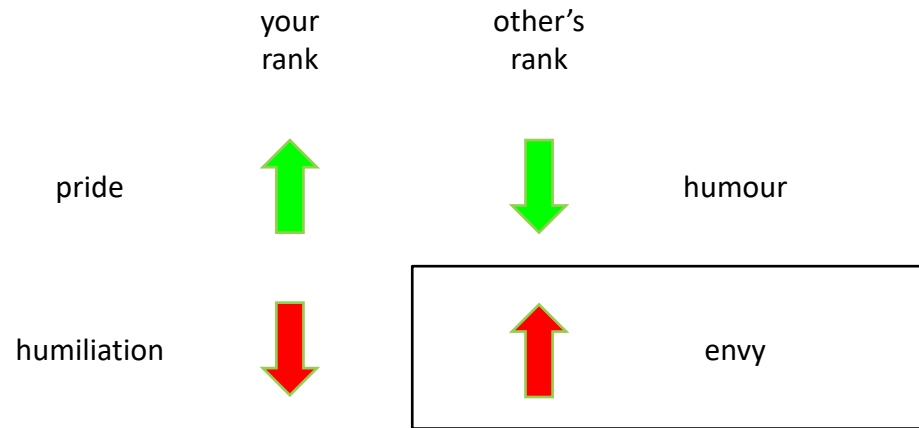
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You feel envy when
somebody's rank rises.



Envy is not immature or childish – it's real.

Fortunately, only former peer can make you feel envy – not strangers.

Unlike other rank emotions, envy is permanent.

You feel envy when you:

- a neighbor gets a better car than you
- a co-worker gets promoted before you
- a teammate gets an award and you don't
- a sibling gets more attention from your parents
- a college classmate gets a better paying job than you
- a high school classmate goes to a better college than you

“X, a former peer of mine,
is now higher rank than me.”

You only feel envy when a peer does better than you.

- you don't envy strangers that have done better
 - Ferrari driven by a stranger: no
 - Ferrari driven by a former classmate: yes
- envy punishes you for not reaching your full potential
 - envy uses peers as a proxy for your potential
 - since you were equals, peers have the same potential
 - if peer does better, you didn't reach your full potential

The more similar a peer was, the stronger envy is.

- surprisingly, strength of envy not tied to change in rank
 - unlike pride and humiliation
- instead, strength of envy is tied to peer similarity
 - more circumstances you shared, the stronger envy is
 - focuses you on those who best represent your potential
- siblings usually trigger the strongest envy
 - shared the most circumstances – parents, genes, experiences
 - twins feel stronger envy than non-twin siblings
- same year alumni trigger stronger envy different year alumni
 - you care about the alumni who sat beside you
 - you don't care about alumni who did not sit beside you

The size of a peer's gap is important but only to decide if they're ahead.

- people want to know much better a peer is doing
 - how much they get paid
 - how big their house is
- this helps decide if they feel envy – not how strong it is
 - if they do much better, they feel envy
 - if they do only slightly better, may not feel envy
 - may assume not significantly different – no envy
 - may see offsetting lower rank in other areas – no envy

Unlike other rank emotions, envy is permanent.

- other rank emotions, envy does not automatically stop
 - pride and humiliation stop when your new rank is old
 - humour stops after the first time you hear a joke or gossip
- you feel envy as long as a gap exists with your former peer
 - envy keeps punishing you for not reaching full potential
- envy does stop if you close the gap and match your former peer
 - envy coerces you to increase your rank
- envy also stops if the rank of the peer falls back to your level
 - the motivation behind the tall poppy syndrome

Lots of people feel envy.

- all former peers of a top-ranked person feel envy
 - every classmate, neighbour, friend, sibling, teammate, . . .
 - and that envy is permanent for all of those people
- particularly problematic for peers of famous top-ranked people
 - all of Bieber's classmates, neighbours, teammates feel envy
 - and are reminded almost daily of his higher rank

The best reason to be top-ranked is not feeling envy.

- unlike others, the top-ranked cannot feel more pride
 - they're already top-ranked
- they face a greater threat of humiliation than others
 - they have no where to go but down
 - they have farther to fall – stronger humiliation
- why is it good to be top-ranked? – not feeling envy
 - the top-ranked don't feel envy
 - everybody else does

It's best to acknowledge that envy is normal.

- envy is as normal as pride, humiliation or humour
 - are universal to humans and serve a biological purpose
 - not a reaction you can “get over” or suppress like a sneeze
- envy has historically been dismissed as immature or petty
 - inconvenient for bosses/parents – don't understand it
 - dismissing envy as immature or petty makes the problem worse
 - in addition to envy, envious person thinks they're immature
- instead of dismissal, it would be better to acknowledge envy
 - first, avoids making the problem worse
 - second, makes it possible to openly talk about how to minimize envy
- helps the envious and the envied
 - top-ranked will stop wondering why people don't like them

Avoid people you envy.

- if a former peer now outranks you, you will feel envy
 - even if they are nicest person and do things for you
- difficult to stop envy by closing the gap
 - hard to match luck of people, lack time to catch-up
 - don't want close gap by bringing other person down
- only reach option is avoid people you envy
 - don't google them, don't socialize with them, find new circle of friends
 - reducing interaction can difficult, but only during the transition
 - people you envy usually close – siblings, classmates, childhood friends
 - lose moderate affection, but start with new people and no envy
 - David Miliband moved to the US to avoid Ed – brother elected party leader

Avoid people who envy you.

- if you become higher-ranked, you'll cause others to feel envy
 - regardless of how nice you are
 - regardless of what they say they feel
- the envy others feel will be problematic
 - others will be passive aggressive
 - the underlying tension will intrude on relations
- best to avoid people who envy you
 - affection and pride is outweighed by envy problems
 - find new friends, visit with sibling less often
 - new friends don't need to be high-ranked – just not former peers
 - top-ranked people often follow this plan reluctantly
 - they're not snobs – they don't want to encounter envy

Avoid making others feel envy.

- leaders frequently make others envy others
 - parents, bosses, teachers or coaches
 - praise/reward one person makes all others feel envy
- envious people will be unhappy and uncooperative
 - will avoid helping praised person to avoid
 - leaders want to keep praising/rewarding good behavior
- solution is private praising/rewarding
 - motivates good behavior while minimizing envy
- if public praising/rewarding unavoidable, link to desired behavior
 - more likely that envy will motivate same behaviour

Envy and jealousy are different emotions.

envy	jealousy
everybody	only men in love
punishes you for not reaching your full potential	coerces men to prevent women from being impregnated by other men
“X, a former peer of mine, is higher-ranked than me.”	“My woman made another man feel sexual pleasure.”
negative mental effect	negative mental effect
no stop	“I harmed my woman as much she made the other man feel sexual pleasure.”

Next week's topics are:

Sun Oct 22	Monogynic Love Infatuation
Sun Oct 29	Jealousy, Heartbreak Sexual Sensations
Sun Nov 05	Parental Love, Cute, Grief Affection, Loneliness, Crying
Sun Nov 12	Pride, Humiliation Humour, Laughter, Envy
Sun Nov 19	Revenge, Anger, Criminal Guilt Compassion, Selfish Guilt Minor Sensations, Startle, Fear
Sun Nov 26	Analyzing Happiness
Sun Dec 03	cancelled